

Herts Community Solutions is a network of voluntary sector support organisations working in Hertfordshire to support the health and wellbeing of our communities



In this issue:

- ◆ Introduction
- ◆ Update from HCS partners
- ◆ Contact details
- ◆ Unsubscribe?

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the first edition of the HCS Weekly Newsletter which has been developed to showcase the work that partner organisations are currently undertaking to support the response to the COVID-19 pandemic in Hertfordshire local communities and the support being given to county led initiatives.

MOBILISING VOLUNTEERS ACROSS THE COUNTY

Overview

In this edition we will be sharing information about how we have been working as a team to mobilise the thousands of volunteers across our county who have stepped up since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, to help those less fortunate than themselves. We have been completely stunned by the huge numbers of volunteers, and have quickly stepped up to make sure that they are all checked and vetted before allocating them out.

Partnership working with #TeamHerts

Team Herts Volunteering set up a portal for volunteers to register their interest and to provide information. These details were then distributed to local volunteer centres (Community Action Dacorum / Communities 1st / Broxbourne / Welwyn & Hatfield). Each area undertook vetting procedures (in a common format) which included checking ID, obtaining references and a video interview which meant that volunteers could easily be assigned to County, Borough or local roles quickly and efficiently once these checks were completed.

Sir Mike Penning, MP for Hemel Hempstead, was delighted to be able to volunteer to deliver Easter eggs – the Easter eggs were kindly donated by Aldi and the Food Bank (via TK Maxx and Debenhams). Mike was helped by his wife Angie so they were able to work together without breaking social distancing rules.



Training for volunteers

As the county comes together, an inspirational number of people have offered to volunteer their time and expertise to support local residents. This has created a huge need for volunteer training which is now being offered by Herts Community Foundation (HCF) Training & Development, with our webinar [‘Volunteering with Vulnerable Adults’](#). Working in partnership with #TeamHerts Volunteering and Community Action Dacorum (Creative Learning), the course ensures that volunteers are able to start volunteering quickly and safely in response to COVID-19. We are using the latest webinar technology, with a live quiz to test understanding and an interactive Q&A function. The course not only ensures vital safeguarding of the adults that volunteers may be supporting, but provides an opportunity for volunteers to ‘meet each other’ in the webinar and foster a community spirit in this time of crisis. We have run 12 webinars over the past four weeks, training over 500 volunteers. We will be running an ambitious programme of courses over the coming 6 weeks, hoping to reach over 2,000 volunteers by the end of May.

Placement of volunteers

All partnership organisations worked with their member charities to identify and share needs, information and data to allow the allocation of volunteer roles to be done in line with the needs of the population. Currently about half the volunteers have been allocated in line with (or better than) national averages.

“I volunteered as I wanted to be able to help the ones that aren’t able to go out and get shopping etc and while I was still able to I wanted to help out. It gives a real sense of happiness that the elderly and vulnerable don’t need to worry and I have a purpose still in these unprecedented times. And they are so grateful for when they receive their shopping and makes me happy and smiley.” **Angela (new to volunteering)**

CDA Herts wants to thank all their rural based people and communities who responded to their rural services survey. The 80 replies shared their Rural Support Network and they are busy collating the information and in the process of producing maps of where local people have all stepped in to help their neighbours and families in need. They are also particularly proud of the 75 volunteers, who have made contact with them and have passed them over to Communities 1st. The staff team have themselves volunteered to help with the volunteer interviews.

One client, Mrs P, 48, from Watton at Stone, has a disabled and vulnerable daughter and they have both been isolating together. They got in touch with HertsHelp to ask for assistance with shopping as they had been unable to organise a priority online shopping slot and were struggling with a lack of food. Their letter confirming her daughter’s status as a vulnerable person had not arrived. We were really pleased to be able to arrange for their shopping to be done with just a day’s notice and the driver, Mr R, even called to check on alternatives whilst he was shopping. The client was so pleased with the help she received and the friendliness of the driver she has asked if she can book the driver for another trip.

Moving forward

Looking forward we are working towards keeping these volunteers on our books after normal life resumes (whatever that may be) with people who have never had a taste for volunteering now knowing how to support their local community and we will be discussing as a group what that may look like.



This newsletter is being compiled by Community Action Dacorum on behalf of all the partners.

If you no longer wish to receive this newsletter please send ‘unsubscribe’ to newsletter@hertscommunity.org.uk